

**Sierra Nevada Conservancy Grant Program
Safe Drinking Water, Water Quality and Supply, Flood Control,
River and Coastal Protection Act of 2006 (Proposition 84)**

Subregion: EAST **County:** MONO

Applicant: EASTERN SIERRA LAND TRUST

Project Title: CELEBRATING CONSERVATION: BENTON HOT SPRINGS VALLEY

Reference Number: SNC 070273

PROJECT SCOPE

The Eastern Sierra Land Trust will host an outreach event at the newly acquired Benton Hot Springs Valley conservation easement site. The purpose of the event is to make the public aware of the new easement by inviting them onto the property and to build a volunteer base to help manage the land in the long-term. Specifically, the Trust will:

- Conduct initial planning meetings;
- Develop informational resources and signage to be made available on the site;
- Compile comprehensive list of invitees, dignitaries, and other participants;
- Compile necessary materials and equipment for volunteer trainings;
- Initiate production of environmental lesson plans;
- Coordinate with landowner on event logistics and accessibility;
- Produce and distribute invitations;
- Develop plan for ongoing volunteer participation;
- Coordinate with local press to advertise event;
- Host event and track attendees and stakeholder groups represented;
- Conduct a survey of participants to gauge impact of event.

The unveiling event for the Trust's newest conservation easement will serve primarily as a recruitment tool to acquire volunteers in anticipation of future invasive species removal efforts. In addition, the interpretive materials and signage will serve as a resource for visitors to the site in perpetuity.

PROJECT SCHEDULE

DETAILED PROJECT DELIVERABLES	TIMELINE
Conduct initial planning meetings	April 2008
Initiate development of informational resources and signage	April 2008
Produce and distribute invites	April 2008
Compile list of invitees, dignitaries, and other participants	April 2008
Acquire necessary materials for volunteer trainings	April 2008
Initiate production of environmental lesson plans	April 2008
Coordinate with landowner on event logistics and accessibility	April 2008
Place interpretive signage on site	May 2008
Develop plan for ongoing volunteer participation	May 2008
Coordinate with local press to advertise event	May 2008
Host event and track attendees and stakeholder groups represented	June 2008 – August 2008
Conduct a survey of participants to gauge impact of event	August 2008
Final Report/Final Payment Request	September 2009

PROJECT COSTS

PROJECT BUDGET CATEGORIES	TOTAL SNC FUNDING
Invitations, advertisement, informational resources development	\$2,000
Tools and Supplies for Volunteers	250
Interpretive signage design and production	3,000
Brochure production	1,000
Staff Salary – AmeriCorps member	2,100
Staff Salary – Lands Director	3,500
Staff Salary – Investment Opportunities Coordinator	4,050
Administration	2,535
GRAND TOTAL	\$18,435

Letters of Support:

- Benton Hot Springs Valley Property Owner
- California Native Plant Society
- Eastern Sierra Audubon Society
- Mono County District 2 Supervisor
- Mono-Inyo Agricultural Commissioner
- Department of Fish and Game

Recommendation:

Recommend for funding at requested amount of \$18,435.

Project Summary

The Eastern Sierra Land Trust has successfully completed eight conservation easements with private landowners in the past six years. One of the most recently completed projects preserves 900 acres of prime grazing, water resources, and meadowlands near the historic town of Benton Hot Springs. Several unique natural features are found on this property, and the landowner is eager to share it with the public in some specially crafted community events. Since this property has been held privately for four generations, the public has not had the opportunity to visit and appreciate the exceptional natural resources here.

The commencement of this project would be a public celebration of the acquisition of a conservation easement held by the Eastern Sierra Land Trust. The public, along with local and state officials, will have the opportunity to come to the property to "Celebrate Conservation" and learn about the benefits of preserving this land in perpetuity. Special events would continue throughout the year with various events and activities focused on restoration, environmental education, history and culture, photography, and other topics of relevance.

Several community groups have expressed interest in programs on this property because of the diversity of resources found here. For example, more than 114 bird species have been documented, a rare springsnail was discovered during a preliminary site assessment, and the rare Inyo County star tulip covers portions of the meadows. A teacher at Benton Elementary has requested a service learning project with his students. The Eastern Sierra Audubon and the CA Native Plant Society would like to offer public field trips to their membership, and the Eastern Sierra Land Trust has committed to do a thistle eradication project with the help of community volunteers. The CA Department of Fish and Game would like to research the possibility of creating a native fish refugio due to the consistent water quality and temperature of the springs. The ranch, which stands in the shadow of Boundary Peak, the highest peak in Nevada, also offers excellent opportunities for geology excursions. In addition, the landowner would like the ESLT to produce a self-guided tour brochure for guests visiting his Bed & Breakfast in nearby Old Benton.

To date, the ESLT has conducted limited environmental education programs within its service area. In September 2007, it coordinated a "Living With Wildlife" festival, which focused on the Round Valley deer herd migration corridor near Bishop, CA. This community event featured hands-on activities for children and visual displays and was in cooperation with several other groups such as CA Dept. of Fish and Game, CA Deer Association, Eastern Sierra Wildlife Care, Eastern Sierra Valentine Reserve, and CA Dept. of Forestry. From this event the ESLT was invited into the Bishop School District to teach school children about the migratory deer population in the area. ESLT staff and volunteers presented two days of lessons for third and fourth grade students in December.

This project is an opportunity to expand our offerings to various audiences regarding resource protection of unique habitats and ranchlands through conservation easements. It is designed to be a pilot program to bring together various community groups and agencies in a single place, in a location previously not accessible to the public. We hope to expand these services in the future on other properties for which there is a demand.

The total budget for the project is \$19,435 and includes event organizing, outreach materials, equipment, signs, and transportation. The total request from SNC is \$18,435.